

van den Hul The Frog

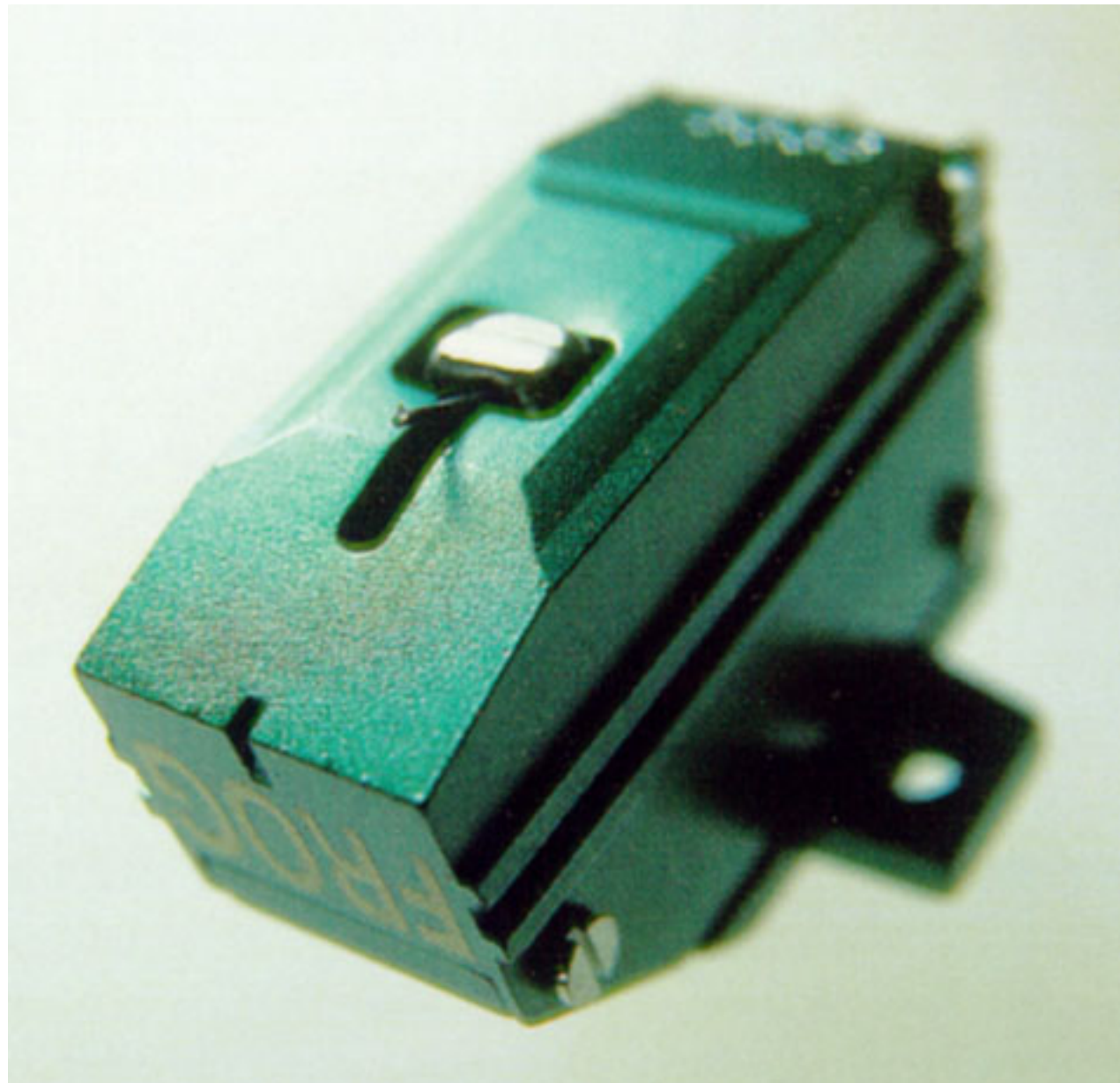
Image HiFi 5/96 (Translation from German)

It has really taken long enough before I finally managed to get a system of the Dutch phono cartridge specialist van den Hul in my tonearm's headshell. Already since the beginning of the 80's, a van den Hul system stood on top of my hi-fi wanted list; The acquisition of such however was contrary to my student-like income situation. What made me enthusiast at that time for a phono cartridge that I had never heard before? Van the Hul's first creation was based on my favourite system, the EMT. The transducer from the city of Lahr had to take over 20 modifications lying down, until it was ennobled to "van the Hul MC1" with a small label on its front. One therefore could expect unbridled dynamics and powerful basses from the revised version, and when also some additional fine texturedness and spatiality would be included...

Anyhow the ennobling modification to me remained a dream, though as Image HiFi co-worker at first I did not have luck with the products coming from Oene: In the redaction's listening room a Grasshopper, that already had been correctly set up in the tonearm, fell to the victim of an overactive cleaning lady, then a change of company ownership followed - problem after problem. But now

finally it has succeeded: Van the Hul's newest development, The Frog, - even already having been run in - arrived in Gröbenzell in time and also didn't take damage with its installation in the Wheaton.

The Frog is settled between the MC Two Special and the Grasshopper II (*) and thus represents the top model of the lightweight series equipped with a closed housing.



(*): More accurately The Frog, which is equipped with the coil of a Grasshopper III and the front pole and suspension of the Grasshopper IV, is settled between the MC Two Special and the Grasshopper III/IV. —**A.J. van den Hul B.V.**

For the cantilever Mr. van the Hul uses boron as he already did with his EMT versions. The coils have been wound from matched-crystal copper and naturally the needle shape is a vdH type I, which, as with the Grasshoppers, even is of grade "S". The Frog needs a tracking force of 1.5 gram and supplies a quite high output voltage, which, also with less sensitive MC inputs, should not give any rise to noise problems; The Frog furthermore requires a load impedance of at least 200 ohms. In its measurement sheet 500 ohms or more are mentioned as being optimal. My Higher Fidelity phono-preamp EQ-3003 thus offers The Frog with best conditions.

For the load impedance adjustment as usual Keith Jarrets "standards" come on the table. And The Frog does not fall short of my expectations: It depicts a spacious soundstage, finds clearly differentiated positions for the cymbals, also reveals the finest dying away of the same and resolves rapid piano walks precisely. Gary Peacocks upright bass as usual does work somewhat thinner, this however absolutely without losing its punch. Here, the van the Hul proves itself as being extremely controlled and rapid. Its passionate joy of play and its captivating liveliness are the things that make this cartridge to be something very special. Nevertheless there is a small thing to grumble at. The tonal balance seems to be slightly shifted towards the high tones - at least in my brightly tuned system.

A slightly reduced load impedance works wonders here: The glittering cymbals step back and the piano suddenly is more in focus of interest again. This however does not by any means concern the positioning on the imaginary stage, but rather the tonal balance. The effects on the lower frequency range are also considerable: The upright bass wins at volume, the sound loses its smoothness, gets corners and edges, this without losing even the slightest tinge of definition. The most however I was astonished by the effect of the load impedance on the dynamic behavior of The Frog. It now takes on more lustful and energy-loaded. I have only rarely heard "The Wrong Blues" with as much momentum and drive. Further lowering the load impedance does not only take away a part of the system's spontaneity, but also again shifts the tuning to the bright side.

With the "Concerto Andaluz", reissue of the Philips 9500 563, The Frog can bring its abilities to the right light: It untangles the intertwined melody lines of the four guitars, generously grants the orchestra room on the stage and doesn't meddle with discussion about the seat order of the musicians. The subdivision in depth succeeds outstandingly, and the van the Hul's swiftness grants the composition a striking grace and the interpretation joyous ease. Here, there can't be

any question of tonal balance out of plumb.

The Frog really takes an exceptional position: I know few, if at all any phono cartridge, which plays in such a firing way, so live similar and so dynamic. This, however also makes The Frog to be a system for connoisseurs. In over-bright audio chains or in only moderately dampened listening rooms one should keep caution - in all other cases: Fantastic!

Image Information	
Phono cartridge van den Hul The Frog	
Output voltage at 5.7 cm/s eff.:	0.65 mV
Static compliance:	35 μ m/mN
System weight:	8.2 Gram
Price:	See Advisory Retail Pricelist on van den Hul website
Warranty period:	12 Months

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